

CLAIMS

1. A steering assembly for use with a trolley, the trolley including a carriage and at least one castor wheel swivel-mounted about a vertical axis, the steering assembly including:

co-operating wheel blocking members mounted respectively to a fixed mounting on the carriage or a wheel mounting assembly and the castor wheel; and

actuation means for causing the selective engagement of the co-operating wheel blocking members so as to prevent swivelling of the castor wheel.

2. The steering assembly of claim 1, wherein the wheel blocking members include a first wheel blocking member comprising a ferrule having a recess, and a second wheel blocking member comprising a pawl for engagement in that recess.

3. The steering assembly of claim 2, wherein the first wheel blocking member is mounted above the horizontal axis of the castor wheel.

4. The steering assembly of claim 3, wherein the second wheel blocking member, is directly mounted to the carriage or wheel mounting assembly by means of a bracket slidably mounted to the carriage or wheel mounting assembly.

5. The steering assembly of claim 4, wherein the bracket is slidably movable between a first position in which the bracket facilitates engagement of the wheel blocking members and a second position in which the bracket prevents engagement of the wheel blocking members.

6. The steering assembly of claim 5, further comprising actuation means for causing displacement of the bracket between the first and second position.

7. The steering assembly of claim 6, wherein the actuation means includes a cam lever pivotably mounted to the carriage and bearing upon the bracket upon rotation of the cam to displace the bracket towards the second position.

8. The steering assembly of claim 7, wherein the actuation means further includes a pushing mechanism to enable the bracket to be slidably moved to the second position.

9. The steering assembly of claim 8, wherein the pushing mechanism is a

pushing plate provided at one end of the bracket.

10. The steering apparatus of claim 9, wherein the pushing plate is integrally formed with the bracket.

11. The steering assembly of claim 10, wherein at least one of the cam lever and the pushing mechanism is operated by contact with an adjacent trolley.

12. The steering assembly of claim 5, further comprising biasing means for biasing the bracket towards the first position.

13. The steering assembly of claim 12, wherein the biasing means includes one or more resilient members mounted between the bracket and the carriage.

14. The steering assembly of claim 2, wherein the second blocking member is directly mounted to the carriage or wheel mounting assembly.

15. The steering assembly of claim 14, wherein the castor wheel is mounted so as to be movable relative to the carriage between a first position in which the bracket facilitates engagement of the wheel blocking members, and a second position in which the bracket prevents engagement of the wheel blocking members.

16. The steering assembly of claim 1, wherein the carriage and castor wheel are caused to move towards the first position by application of force to the carriage.

17. The steering assembly of claim 2, wherein the second wheel blocking member is pivotably mounted to the carriage or wheel mounting assembly so as to be movable between a first position causing engagement of the wheel blocking members and a second position in which engagement of the wheel blocking members is prevented.

18. The steering assembly of claim 17, wherein the second wheel blocking member is pivotably mounted to the carriage or wheel mounting assembly by means of a latching mechanism.

19. The steering assembly of claim 18, wherein the latching mechanism includes a latch device for retaining the second wheel blocking member in either the first or second position.

20. The steering assembly of claim 19, wherein the second wheel blocking member is provided with a first arm having said pawl for engagement with said recess and a second arm for engagement with said latching device.
21. The steering device of claim 20, wherein the engagement of the second arm of the second wheel blocking member with the latch device retains the wheel blocking members in the disengaged position.
22. The steering assembly of claim 21, wherein the latch device includes a magnet.
23. The steering assembly of claim 21, wherein the latch device includes a latch plate.
24. The steering assembly of claim 17, wherein the actuation means includes a peddle member projecting from the second wheel blocking member.
25. The steering assembly of claim 24, wherein the peddle member is latched by the latch device in either the first or second position.
26. The steering assembly of claim 24, wherein the depression of the peddle member releases the second wheel blocking member and causes engagement of the wheel blocking members.
27. A trolley including the steering assembly of any one of claims 1-26.